

"Wahhabism": What Is Behind the Label?

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My mother who lives in Russia once said to me: "I hope you are not a Wahhaabi." I said: "Mother, do you know what that word means?" She said: "No." I knew that she did not know almost anything about that word, but because it was, and still is, being used in the Russian (and might I add here: the world) media to mean "evil, ugly, blood-thirsty monsters with bushy beards who call themselves Muslims" and any other negative label one can associate with a word, she drew the conclusion that all that was being said to her was true. After all, the main newspaper of the old USSR was called Pravda, i.e. the Truth! It is still in existence, by the way.

That is how people are conditioned not to think, not to analyse, not to criticise, just to blindly accept what they are told without any proof or justification or with some questionable (that is why you should not question!) "proofs". Just to be a sheep, not a human being gifted with the enormous power and ability of his intellect. Our religion does not accept that kind of conditioning and that kind of twisting of reality. We are obliged to follow the facts and proofs alone, not conjecture, not our wishes or our desires, however good they may seem to us.

And we are not allowed to wrong anyone by saying about them what is not true or even accurate. So what is behind this label, "wahhabi", because that is what it has become: a label, a brand to brand anyone who is out of line, who does not agree, who dares to even criticise or ask for proof!

The word itself originates from the name of an Islamic scholar, Muhammad bin Abdul-Wahhaab Al-Tameemi, who lived and preached in an area known as Najd then and in present-day Saudi Arabia from 1115 year after Hijrah, which corresponds to the year 1703, to around 1206 H., which is year 1792 in the Gregorian calendar. He used to call the people of the area to Tauheed and the Sunnah and reject the practise of Shirk (associating or ascribing partners to Allah), which was prevalent in that area at the time, and innovations in the religion.

You might ask: "That's it?" In a nutshell, yes. So what's all the fuss about this man and his name? (It is actually his father's name, but never mind: people who are hell-bent on abusing someone and besmirching his good name would not really care about that "small" detail). The answer to this question is shockingly simple: at the time of his call and preaching, same as now and in the past, when our Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) was preaching, there were many people who were not at all impressed with what the Sheikh was doing. In actual fact, they despised the Sheikh and his call. Why? Many reasons, but none that are religious: if people could abandon the false gods they were told to worship and worship their Creator alone and communicate with Him directly, those critics would lose followers, and hence, money, positions of influence and anything else that comes as a perk when you are the chief brain-washer of the community. Why else anyone who calls himself a Muslim would so vehemently oppose someone who calls to what our Prophet Muhammad (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) used to call to: directing all acts of worship to Allaah and only following the path of the Messenger of Allaah (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam)? Only a hypocrite, an innovator or someone who stands to lose some worldly standing or position, not to mention material possessions, would object to that call. If you do not believe me, check the true biography of the Sheikh, may Allah have mercy on

him, and compare his call and what he wrote in his books to the Qur'aan and the Sunnah.

And do not listen to those in the Muslim community who say: "You should not read and understand the Qur'aan and hadeeth on your own, because you are not at that level yet. You must have an Imam to do that. You must take everything that Imam says, because you do not know." While it is true that one needs a teacher to guide him through the learning process, the ultimate objective is to know and follow the texts of Islam, applying them to our life, not end up just knowing what so and so said. Our aim is to follow the Prophet (sallallaahu alayhi wa sallam) in everything he told us, not to follow someone else in everything he told us. So we can safely conclude that the label "wahhaabi" was first coined by the enemies of the da'wah (call) of Tauheed and the Sunnah, and later on passed down through generations of Sunnah-haters to our time. The same way as the lovers of the Sunnah inherit their love and respect for it from those who followed and preached the Sunnah before them, the enemies and haters of it inherit their hatred and enmity from those who used to oppose and hate the Sunnah and the people of the Sunnah before them.

I am also sick and tired ... of the so-called "experts", from the Muslims and non-Muslims alike, who come on TV and radio and write in the press and use this label "wahhaabi" as they please, especially when there is a terrorist attack of some kind somewhere in the world. One of them might say with a clever look on his/her face: "Oh, yes, this is precisely what the wahhaabis believe and advocate" or "The wahhaabi branch of Islam says..." or even "Al-Qaeda is mainly staffed and supported by the wahhaabis"! Don't get me started on Al-Qaeda, or CIAedah, as some call it.

I challenge you to bring one Muslim in front of me who knew of a terrorist organisation called Al-Qaeda before 9/11 happened, just one. This is the same conditioning: we are given certain words which we are supposed to associate with certain ideas and notions. We are not to question it or challenge it, we are to accept it. Why? Because, we are told, that is the truth. The truth is that, for centuries and centuries, certain people always tried, and very often successfully, to manipulate public opinion one way or another, especially in times of conflicts and wars. Not because they care about what the general public think, oh no, but to silence the critics through their own friends, family and peers and to get as many candidates for cannon fodder as possible from their own population. Clever, isn't it? Not clever enough. Because there will always remain those who will retain the ability to think and analyse, the ability to sift the truth from falsehood and show it to others, as is the case with the religion of Islam in general and with the issue of wahhaabism in particular.

They may not be great in number, they may not be rich and powerful, but they will always remain until just before the Day of Judgement. If numbers meant that the greater the number of people the more they are right and upon the truth, then China would emerge as the likely candidate for that, and I do not think anyone would say that. If, on the other hand, wealth and power determined one's closeness to the truth and guidance, then people like Bill Gates, Warren Buffet and George Bush would be deemed to be right and guided in what they do. Far from it, as you will agree.

So the criterion for guidance and misguidance is not any of that. The criterion is knowing the truth and following it, i.e. the Qur'aan and the Sunnah by the understanding of the Pious Predecessors...

So, to conclude, wahhaabism is just like terrorism or any other swear word: a label that can be stuck to anyone who is undesirable or unliked in certain circles or to certain people. I do not accept it. No one I knows accepts it. But it keeps being used all the time, just like a swear word. But, unlike most swear words, its meaning is not very clear or apparent, and it is allowed to be used on the BBC!

What is the world coming to..?!

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